



United States Senate Budget Committee

JEFF SESSIONS | Ranking Member

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Contact: Stephen Miller, 202.224.0642

Sessions: 'Shameful Display' From Reid, Dem Leaders On Budget

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If, after this shameful display, Majority Leader Reid wants to adjourn for recess, all I can say is this: not with my consent. I will force a vote on it. Senate Democrats will have to stand before the American people, having more than 750 days since passing a budget, and declare that they will go into a one-week vacation having not taken a single, solitary step to address our nation's fiscal crisis."

WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, spoke on the Senate floor today ahead of a series of votes on budget proposals, including several Republican plans to address our dangerous debt. Missing from those budgets was the Senate Democrat proposal, drafted in closed door meetings but never made public despite 756 days having passed since the Democrat-led Senate has passed a budget. In his remarks, Sessions objected to the Majority Leader's planned Senate recess, which would occur despite the ongoing budget blockade from Democrat leaders:

Sessions' remarks, as prepared, follow:

"Mr. President, the simple fact is that the American people are furious with Washington. And they have every right to be. They work hard, pay their taxes, and play by the rules. They sacrifice for their families, contribute to their communities, and uphold this nation's values. They have built up the greatest, most dynamic economy on the face of the Earth. But Washington has wasted their tax dollars, eroded our values, and placed this nation's economy at grave risk.

Politicians have arrogantly believed that the rules don't apply to them. In the midst of a deep recession, as American families tightened their belts, Washington went on a historic spending spree. By the end of the first three fiscal years of the Obama Administration, we will have accumulated another \$5 trillion dollars in total gross debt. Our deficit this year alone will

approach one and a half trillion dollars. Our annual budget has nearly doubled from what it was at the beginning of the decade.

This enormous surging debt prompted the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to describe it as the greatest threat to our national security. At \$14 trillion dollars it hovers over our economy like a dark cloud. It undermines confidence and fosters uncertainty. Studies show our crushing debt stifles job growth and robs us of as many as one million jobs a year.

We borrow \$5 billion a day, \$100 billion a month and, under the president's vision, we are on track to do the unthinkable: doubling our entire national debt in just ten years. We are faced with what has rightly been called the most predictable economy crisis in our history. The question is not whether such a crisis will occur but whether we act in time to prevent it.

A major financial crisis is not just some hypothetical danger: it is very real and it is very serious. If the world loses confidence in our ability to control our spending and debt, our interest rates could dramatically spike. Greece saw its interest rates triple before its debt crisis hit. The rates for Ireland and Portugal quadrupled.

If the same were to happen to the United States we could become unable to pay the interest on our debt and face a Greece-like debt crisis that plunges our country into a deep recession. This would not be some distant financial event, but an economic disaster felt most severely by everyday working Americans.

There is no reason we should be in this situation. America's workforce is the most productive on earth. Our system of government is the envy of the world. But those who occupy the halls of power have failed to uphold the public trust. They have squandered this nation's wealth and threatened our children's future.

So, again, the American people have every right to be furious.

They rose up in the last election and the big spenders in Washington took a shellacking. We saw the emergence of the Tea Party—a diverse collection of Americans spread across the country who, after years of sitting silent, spoke out for the first time in their lives. They are good and decent patriotic Americans who fear for their country and for the future their children will inherit.

Their concerns are shared by the vast majority of Americans. Overall, more than 70 percent of Americans believe this country is on the wrong track.

To get back on the right track requires strong leadership. I have continued to hope that President Obama would rally the country behind needed reform. Unfortunately, the president seems determined to not only keep our country on its dangerous course but to accelerate our pace. He offered a budget in February—a budget many Democrats praised—that he and his budget director declared to the whole world would 'not add more to the debt,' 'spend only money that we have each year,' and 'live within our means.' But those statements were not honest. The president's budget never once produces a deficit less than \$748 billion. And the deficits climb to \$1.2 trillion in the tenth year.

And what about the Senate? What is this august body doing to confront this crisis? Is the Budget Committee meeting to work on a plan? Is there a Senate budget being considered on the floor today? Will we be amending a resolution on the Senate floor?

The answer to all of these questions is no. Today is the 756th day since the Democrat-led Senate passed a budget. In that time Congress has spent more than \$7 trillion dollars. We have accumulated another \$3.2 trillion in debt. What do we have to show for it? Unemployment stuck around 9%, anemic economic growth, and the very real threat of a debt crisis.

But Majority Leader Reid and the big spenders in the Democrat party are determined to keep spending and spending and spending. The reason we have not seen a budget from Chairman Conrad and the Democrat Senate is because they know that they can't put forward a plan that wins the support both of their caucus and of the American people. News reports confirmed that budget proposal Senate Democrats were working on—and then abandoned—relied more heavily on taxes than savings. It would have cut only \$1.5 trillion over ten years. That doesn't even come close to what we need to cut. We are going to spend \$45 trillion over the next 10 years. Our national debt will be 100% of GDP by the end of September.

House Republicans have stepped forward, fulfilled the duty they asked the American people to bestow on them, and presented an honest, courageous plan that will get the job done. It will save, or cut, around \$6 trillion. But Leader Reid wants to use our floor time this week to simply vote down this plan while offering nothing in its place. He just wants to keep spending and spending and spending.

He is simply trying to remove himself from the spotlight that should be directed on the inability or unwillingness of his caucus to deliver a budget plan to the American people.

But the Majority Leader is more than happy to go into recess, more than 750 days since the Senate has passed a budget, and simply be content to have obstructed every single effort to reduce spending or impose budgetary control. He is content, it would seem, to send this chamber into recess after he has failed miserably to protect this nation from the financial danger ahead. He says 'there's no need to have a Democratic budget.' He says it would be 'foolish' to present one. So we'll just keep spending and spending and spending.

What's the real strategy here? The Democrat strategy is just to attack, vilify, and disparage House Republicans because they did the honorable thing and put forward an honest plan. Here's what Sen. Schumer said earlier this week, speaking of today's votes:

We will exhibit this issue as an example of why we need to keep the Senate Democratic in order to counter House Republicans. We will point to this week and say the Republicans tried to end Medicare but a Democratic majority stopped it in the Senate. It's that simple.

Medicare is going to be insolvent in about ten years. House Republicans have a plan to save it. People may disagree on aspects of that plan, may have different ideas for implementation. But the House Republican plan will save Medicare. The Democrat Senate plan is to allow Medicare

to go bust and to waste the Senate's time savaging the House Republican plan with a series of false, dishonest attacks. The Democrat Senate plan is to ignore the danger and just keep spending and spending and spending.

Chairman Conrad, I am sad to say, called the House Republican plan 'ideological,' 'partisan,' 'unreasonable,' and 'draconian'. I was surprised to hear this given that the Chairman served on the fiscal commission, which issued the following statement in the preamble to its report:

In the weeks and months to come, countless advocacy groups and special interests will try mightily through expensive, dramatic, and heart-wrenching media assaults to exempt themselves from shared sacrifice and common purpose. The national interest, not special interests, must prevail. We urge leaders and citizens with principled concerns about any of our recommendations to follow what we call the Becerra Rule: Don't shoot down an idea without offering a better idea in its place.

So after this week's mockery, what is next for the Senate? We will promptly adjourn for recess. The Senate will adjourn for Memorial Day—a time when we honor those who have kept this country safe. But the Senate has done nothing to protect this country from the economic danger that draws nearer each day.

If, after this shameful display, Majority Leader Reid wants to adjourn for recess, all I can say is this: not with my consent. I will force a vote on it. Senate Democrats will have to stand before the American people, having more than 750 days since passing a budget, and declare that they will go into a one-week vacation having not taken a single, solitary step to address our nation's fiscal crisis. They have not even allowed the Budget Committee to meet.

We are told that we don't need public meetings, that a small group of lawmakers and White House officials should meet in secret to hammer out some 11th hour deal that nobody sees or scrutinizes until it's adopted. Well, it's that kind of thinking that got us here in the first place. What this process needs is more sunlight, not less. First, we were told to wait for the Gang of Six. Now we are to supposed to wait for the Biden talks. But at what point will we just do our duty under the law and work on a budget? I firmly believe that the best way out of this debt crisis is to have an open, honest, and public debate.

The one thing we haven't tried in this town is the one thing that I know will work: to have an open, transparent process before the whole world. Let's speak honestly about the dangers we face.

Let's put forward a plan in the Senate to address those dangers. Let's open that plan to amendment and discussion. Let's stand and be counted before the American people. If Democrats think the way out of this crisis is to raise taxes, let them put that plan on paper and let's debate it. But enough operating in the shadows. Enough hiding. Enough ducking. Let's do the people's work.

Let's give the American people the honest process and the honest budget they deserve.

We also need a budget that is based on facts.

All of the evidence shows that deficit reduction plans relying on heavy tax increases are far less successful and result in far less prosperity. Though raising taxes is billed as the compassionate choice, there is nothing compassionate about weakening our economy and bankrupting our country. There is nothing compassionate about dividing up an ever smaller amount of wealth. There is nothing compassionate about ignoring the facts, the evidence, and the lessons of history. A compassionate budget is one that improves the fortunes for every sector of American society—creating jobs, increasing wages, and expanding opportunity.

In other words, we must focus on growing the economy instead of the government. That is the only way to ensure that America is able to compete, to lead and to thrive in the 21st century.

An honest budget is one that not only puts our budget on a path to balance but our country on a path to balance. In other words, we need a budget that shifts the balance of power from Washington back to the people.

At its core, the debate over our nation's debt is a debate over our nation's identity.

In his recent speech on the deficit, the president spoke of America's social compact to justify his big-government vision. But the social compact I am familiar with is very different. The American idea is that the government's role is to preserve our liberty, not control our lives.

Ultimately, what we are fighting for is a future for our children that is free from both the burden of debt and the burden of big government. I was not elected to this office to participate in the transformation of America to a European-style social democracy where government dominates our lives.

America's greatness is not found in the size of our government but in the scope of our freedoms. We need a budget that recognizes this essential truth."

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